

THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT

NO. 2337

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 3, 1893
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed:
and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy;
Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.
And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.
And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?
For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?
But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,
(then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.
And he arose, and departed to his house.”
Matthew 9:2-7*

I REMARKED in the reading that the Gospel of Matthew is especially the Gospel of the kingdom and of the King. All through Matthew's writing, the title of King constantly occurs in connection with Christ, and His kingliness is prominent from the opening chapter to the close. Here we see the King exercising His royal prerogatives. In this passage we have several instances of Christ acting as He could not have acted if He had not possessed a royal and divine power.

I. I will go at once to my text and note, first, that JESUS DEALT WITH THE PALSIED MAN IN A TRULY ROYAL AND DIVINE WAY.

The bearers of the man sick of the palsy had broken through the tiling, whatever that may have been, to get him near the Savior. They had dropped him down over the heads of the eager throng and there he lay upon his pallet before Christ, unable to stir hand or foot, but looking up with that gaze of eager expectancy which Christ so well understood.

You will notice that our Lord did not wait for a word to be spoken—He simply looked and *He saw their faith*. Matthew writes, “Jesus seeing their faith.” Who can see faith? It is a thing whose effects can be seen—its signs and tokens are discernable and they were eminently so in this case—for breaking up the roof and putting the man down before Christ in so strange a way, were evidences of their belief that Jesus would cure him. Still, Christ's eyes not only saw the proofs of their faith, but the faith itself.

There stood the four men, speaking with their eyes, and saying, “Master, see what we have done! We are persuaded that we have done the right thing and that You will heal him.” There was the man, lying on his bed, looking up, and wondering what the Lord would do, but evidently cheered by the belief that he was now in a position of hope where, in all probability, he would become a man favored beyond everyone else. Christ not merely saw the looks of this man and his bearers, but He saw their faith.

Ah, friends, *we* cannot see one another's faith! We may see the fruit of it. Sometimes we think that we can discern the lack of it, but to see the faith itself—this needs divine sight, this needs the glance of the eye of the Son of man. Jesus saw their faith and now tonight that same eye are looking upon all in this audience and He sees your faith. Have you any that He can see?

“Oh, yes!” some of you can reply, “we have a humble, trembling faith—not such as it ought to be, but such as we are very thankful to possess.” Some of you, it may be, are conscious of your sin tonight and all the faith you have is just a faint hope, a feeble belief that, if He will but speak to you, you shall

be forgiven. You believe that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, but you have in the background a fear that you cannot come, or that you may not come in a right way.

Still, if it is ever so little faith in Him that you have, my Master sees it, and as in our early days we used to look for a single spark in the tinder that we might get a light on the cold mornings, so does the Lord look for the tiniest gleam of faith in any human heart, that out of it may come a flame of spiritual life. “Jesus seeing their faith.”

Now then, my dear hearer, Christ’s eye is looking at you tonight. Whatever faith you have, exert it now. Believe in Jesus. He is the Son of God—believe in Him as able to save you, for He is able, and He is willing as well as able—and now trust your soul to Him, sink or swim. Determine that if you must die, you will die at the foot of Christ’s cross, but you will go nowhere else for salvation. “Jesus seeing their faith.” His royal and divine sight could perceive that which was hidden from all mere mortal men.

But then, when Jesus saw their faith, observe next that *He dealt first with the chief evil which afflicted this man*. He did not begin by curing him of the palsy. That was bad enough, but sin is worse than the palsy. Sin in the heart is worse than paralysis of every single muscle. Sin is death, but something worse than death—therefore Christ, at the very beginning of this miracle, to show His lordship, His royal, his divine power, said to the man, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” This was laying the axe at the root of the man’s evil nature. This was hunting the lion, the biggest beast of all the foul creatures that lurked in the densest forest of the man’s being. Christ’s words drove the unclean animal from his lair and by His almighty power, rent him as though he had been a kid.

Now, at this time, you may have many troubles and perhaps you are eager to spread them before the Lord. That sick child, your dear husband who is at home ill, that business which is flagging and likely to fail, that disease of yours which is weakening you, and which makes you scarcely fit to be in the Lord’s house tonight. Now, waive all those things, for heavy as they are, they are inconsiderable compared with sin.

There is no venom as poisonous as that of sin. This is the wormwood and the gall—this is the deadly fang of the serpent whose sting infects and inflames our whole being. If this evil is removed, then every ill has gone—therefore, Christ begins with this, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” Breathe a prayer to Him now for the forgiveness of your sin, “Jesus, Master, forgive me! With a word You can pardon all my sin. You have but to pronounce the absolution and all my iniquities will be put away at once and forever. O my Lord, will You not put them away tonight?”

Notice, also, that *Jesus did absolutely forgive that man*, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” He did not say, “They shall be forgiven,” but “They are forgiven, I absolve you from them all. Whatever they may have been, your youthful sins, your manhood sins, your sins before the palsy laid hold upon you, your sins of murmuring since you have been upon that bed—put them all together into one great mass and though they be multitudinous as the stars of heaven, or as the sands on the seashore, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

And the man felt that it was so. He believed that it was so—a load was taken from his heart and his whole spirit was lifted up by that gracious word, “Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” I pray my Master to deal thus with some who are sitting in these pews who are very heavy at heart. May He speak right into the depths of your spirit, “Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee! They are blotted out, they are all gone.”

Oh, what a dreadful time that is to a man when first he sees his sin! It is the darkest moment of his life, but it is a blessed moment when he sees that Christ has put away his sin and has said to him, “You shall not die in your iniquities; for they are all forgiven.” Everything grows light and bright round about him. He himself is like one who comes up out of a well, or out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, yea, out of the very belly of hell. He seems to leap all at once up to the throne of heaven as he sings, “My sins are all forgiven. I am a miracle of grace.” Wonder not if the man can scarcely contain himself—marvel not if he runs, and leaps, and dances for very joy.

This is how Christ behaves towards poor, palsied, sin-bound men and women. He sees their faith and then puts their sin away where it shall be seen no more forever, for He is King, He is God, and He is able to forgive and blot out all iniquity. I have heard of one who, having been under a great sense of sin and being relieved of it, could, for a long time only cry out, “He is a great Forgiver.” When there were other things to be attended to, he could not see to them, nor speak of any other kind of business but this, “He is a great Forgiver.”

I do not feel as if tonight I wanted to say anything else to you but this, “He is a great Forgiver. I have found Him so. Many here have found Him so and all who will trust His great atoning sacrifice shall also know that He is a great Forgiver.”

II. The second division of my subject diverges a little from the first, but it follows the text, and so it is no real divergence. By His royal and divine power, CHRIST READ AND JUDGED MEN’S THOUGHTS.

See those scribes, those students of the letter of the Word, who know how many letters there are in every Book of the Old Testament, and have counted them so accurately that they can tell which is the middle letter. Wonderfully wise men, those! Do you see them? They are very vexed and angry, and they think hard thoughts of Christ. They did not dare to speak out what they thought—the people would not have listened to them just then if they had spoken, so they held their tongues, but they did not hold their hearts, and there was a thought-reader there—not one who professed the art, but One who possessed it—and He heard where the quickest ear would have failed to detect the faintest sound.

Jesus heard the scribes mentally say, “This.” If you look at your Bibles, you will find that the word, “man,” is printed in italics and that the scribes said within themselves, “This,” they meant, “fellow”—they meant any black name that you like to put in, “This blasphemer.” They would not say what they thought of Him—they did not like to call Him anything but just, “This...This offscouring.”

Thus, *Christ read their contempt of Himself*. They had not uttered it, but He had heard it. It is an awful thing to have a silent contempt of Christ. You may pride yourself on saying, “I have never spoken anything against religion. I have never used a profane expression.” No, but if you do not call Jesus your Lord, if you do not acknowledge Him as your Savior, He knows what the contemptuous omission means.

What you do not say, though you only say “This...” and leave a blank space, He reads it all. If there are any here who have such thoughts of my Lord and Master, I do not wish to know them and I hope that they will never let any other creature know them—but let them remember that Jesus knows all about them, for He is a King who reads the secrets of all hearts, and in due time He will lay them bare.

But next, *Jesus marked their charge of blasphemy*. They said in their heart that He blasphemed, for He had taken to Himself the prerogative of God. According to Mark and Luke’s accounts, they asked, “Why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?” Now, mark you, we who worship Christ as God can never have any fellowship with those who deny His Godhead, nor can they have any fellowship with us, for if He be indeed the Son of God, then they blaspheme Him who deny it. And if He be only a man, then we are clearly idolaters and man-worshippers and He did blaspheme. We are obliged to confess that, and we do confess it—if He was not the Son of God, if He had not power to forgive sins, then they rightly judged that He was a blasphemer.

Ah, my hearer, when you are afraid that Jesus cannot forgive your sins, you are trembling on the very verge of blasphemy! There is such a crime as constructive treason and there is such a sin as constructive blasphemy. To deny Christ’s power to save is to make Him but a man—and if you put Him down as only man, you blaspheme. Even though you may not intend to utter blasphemy, there is the shadow of its dark presence even in that unbelief of yours.

Notice, also, how *Jesus judged their thoughts*. He said to them, “Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?” It was their hearts rather than their thoughts that were evil. Intellectual error generally springs from an unrenewed heart. And what evil had these men thought? They had thought Him a blasphemer. They had also thought contemptuously of Him. But the greatest evil of all was that they had limited His

power—they did not believe that He could forgive. They thought it blasphemy on His part to profess to have the power to forgive the sins of men.

Now, my dear hearer, I know that you would shrink from openly blaspheming Christ, that is, if you are the person I think you are. Then, however great your sin at present is, do not make it more by insinuating that He cannot forgive you, for of all sins this must be the most cruel—to think that He is unable to forgive. This stabs at Christ's Saviorship, which is His very heart. If you say, "I am very guilty," say it again, for you say the truth. But if you say, "I am so guilty that He cannot forgive me," I pray you to withdraw that wicked word, lest you should limit the Holy One of Israel and He should have to say to you, "Wherefore thinkest thou evil in thy heart?"

It is thinking evil of Christ to imagine that He cannot forgive. I mean this word for the very worst man in the world. If you are now the blackest soul out of hell, if you are at this moment the most guilty and the most condemned of all the myriad offenders of our ruined race, yet I charge you not to add to your past sin this further evil of doubting Christ's power to save even you. But come as you are and cast yourself at His feet, and say, "Let all Your power to save be shown in me. I the chief of sinners am and here You have an opportunity of showing the greatness of Your power to pardon."

And observe, once more, that, in dealing with these scribes, our Lord spoke right royally and divinely to them, for *He revealed the unreasonableness of their thoughts*. He said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" I ask you who are here tonight if you know any reason why Christ cannot forgive sin? Will anyone here, who doubts His power to pardon, find a reason for that doubt? If you believe (and I will assume that you do believe) that He is the Son of God, can He not forgive sin? If you believe that He did heal the lepers, and the paralyzed, and even raised the dead, can He not forgive sin?

Further, if you believe that He died for sin—that on the cross He offered no less a victim than Himself—wherefore do you think that He cannot forgive? If you believe that He rose again from the dead—and I know that you believe this—if indeed He rose again from the dead for the justification of the ungodly, how is it that He cannot forgive? And if He has gone into glory, and you know that He is at His Father's right hand and is there making intercession for the transgressors, how can you say that He cannot forgive you?

"Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts" in limiting my Master's power? He can forgive everyone here present. He can forgive every soul in whom He sees faith in Himself, whoever He may be and however dire his guilt.

III. Now we come back to the palsied man and our Master again, and notice, in the third place, that right royally JESUS OPENLY DECLARED HIS COMMISSION.

He seems to me to read the letters patent which His Father gave Him when He sent Him on His errand of love and mercy, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

First, *Jesus is the Son of man*. He does not conceal that fact. One would have thought that He would have said, "I am the Son of God," but here He chooses still to hold His Godhead in abeyance, so He says, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. I, the Son of Mary. I, the carpenter's Son. I who dwelt at Nazareth thirty years. I who have gone up and down among you, worn with sufferings, pained by your hostility, wearied by labor for you, I, the Son of man, have power to forgive sins." Think of that. He puts Himself on His very lowest standing and declares that as the Son of man there is bestowed upon Him, by reason of His Godhead, the power to forgive sins.

And having thus declared His title, He goes on to say that *He forgives sins as the Son of man on earth*. He was on earth and He had power on earth—that is, in His earthly life, in His humiliation, when He had made Himself for a while to be less than the Father, so that He could say, "My Father is greater than I"—higher in office, just then—when He had humbled Himself and taken upon Himself the form of a servant, He could say, "The Son of man hath power on earth, at His lowest, divested of glory, here as a Man among men, the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Oh, how I love this word, for if He had power on earth, what power He has in heaven. And if He had power as the Son of man, what power He has as God and Man in one person! Oh, how fully you may

trust Him! Even the Christ whom they could see, the Son of man—for you know that there was a Christ whom they could not see—that Son of God whom carnal eyes could not behold, who must reveal Himself spiritually or be unperceived by mortal sense—even He whom they could see, the Christ whom you poor weeping ones can see, though you cannot see the half of Christ, nay, you cannot see the hundredth part of Christ—the Christ whom you poor doubters can see, the Christ whom you who are all but blind can only see out of the corners of those eyes of yours when you see men as trees walking—even that Christ, the Son of man, in His weakness on earth, was able to forgive sins.

I do not seem as if I ought to try to preach about this glorious truth, but I feel that I ought to state it and leave it as a solemn fact for you to reject at your peril if you dare—or to receive with gladdest joy—for, believe me, your only hope lies here. O guilty sons of Adam, here is the way of escape for you! Your father Adam has ruined you, but the Son of man hath come to seek and to save you, and He declares that He has power on earth to forgive sins.

Now, notice, in this blessed unrolling of His commission as the Son of man, how *Jesus cheers the sad*. He said to the poor palsied man, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” How this should comfort you who are sad on account of sin! It is the Son of man who can forgive you. You tremble at the greatness of God, you are afraid of His majesty, but this Son of man, your Brother, whose hands were pierced with the nails and whose feet still wear the nail-prints, whose side has the gash that the spear of the soldier made—He it is who can forgive sins.

How tenderly He comes to you! How gently does He deal with you! Here is a hand fit for a surgeon, of whom it is said that he must have an eagle’s eye and a lion’s heart, but a lady’s hand. Here is a hand of flesh, a dainty, tender hand of love that brings pardon to you. You have not to encounter God absolutely, but the one Mediator comes in between God and men. He who is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, says to you, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” And this makes our hearts cheer up when they are sorrowing on account of sin.

Beside that, *Jesus assures the forgiven that He has forgiven them*. How I love to think of that blessed fact, that Christ does not forgive us and keep His forgiveness in the dark, but He says, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee,” giving the assurance of forgiveness to the sinner whom He forgives! The realization of pardon is a delightful feeling. It is not worthwhile to sin, whatever comes of it. I cannot say, with Augustine, “*Beata culpa!* Blessed fault!” but oh, if there is a joy outside of heaven that is higher than all others, it is the joy of a sinful soul when divine forgiveness is granted, making the forgiven one whiter than the driven snow and fresher than the morning dew.

I am a forgiven man, wonder of wonders! I, who have broken all God’s laws and brought upon me JEHOVAH’s wrath, am pardoned for all my transgressions. God’s Son has said it and His word is sure and steadfast, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

I think that men would readily give up all the pleasures of this world, and count them as nothing, if they could but know the bliss of forgiven sin. Oh, if any man who says that he loves a merry laugh, did but once know what it is to be reconciled to God, he would count that he never before enjoyed real merriment or understood true mirth. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as I have said, makes us drink of the sweetness of forgiveness. It is not merely that He burns the books that recorded our indebtedness, but He tells us that He has done so. He says, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Thus it was that Christ publicly unrolled His divine commission, declaring that He had power on earth to forgive sins. He came here on purpose to forgive human guilt—not to condemn, nay, not even to condemn her who was caught in the act of adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee,” said He, “Go, and sin no more.”

Jesus came not to condemn the thief who was dying on the cross and confessing that He deserved to die. Nay, He said to him, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” It is Christ’s business to pardon. It is His bliss to pardon. It is His glory to pardon. He came here on purpose that He might pardon the guilty. Oh, that all sinful ones would go to Him for forgiveness!

IV. After having thus declared His commission, let us note, in the fourth place, that JESUS EXHIBITED HIS CREDENTIALS.

Since the scribes disputed His power to pardon, He gave them a practical proof that He could forgive—and I need your special attention to this point. He said to them, in effect, “To forgive sin is a divine act. Now, whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?” I put it to you, dear friends, which is the easier of the two? Mark that Jesus does not ask, “Which is the easier, to forgive sin or to heal the palsy? No. He said, “Which is easier, *to say*, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or *to say*, Arise, and walk?”

Well, now, *the first is much the easier* because there are a great many who can say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” and you cannot see whether the sins are forgiven or not. Look at the number of those who call themselves priests, who say, after they have heard the penitent’s confession, “I absolve you.” It is easy enough to say that—but who is to know whether that person who has professed penitence is absolved or not? There is no apparent change to the observer—the poor sinner who is told that he is absolved may credulously derive some delusive comfort from his fellow sinner’s words—but those who look on cannot see any difference in the man or woman coming back from the confessional from what they were when they went there.

It is very easy to say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee”—any fool can say it, any knave can say it—but then, if you say, “Arise, and walk,” suppose they do not rise and walk, what then? Anybody can stand there and say to the man sick of the palsy, “Arise, and walk,” and the man may make an effort to rise, but falls back as helpless as ever, so that, although both miracles are, in themselves, equally impossible to man and equally require divine power, yet the saying of the one is easy enough, but the saying of the other is more difficult.

Many an impostor would shrink from saying, “Arise, and walk,” for he would be mightily afraid that it would be found one thing to say it, and quite another thing for the patient to really rise and walk. Thus Christ said to the scribes, “I will prove to you that I am divine and therefore that I have the power to forgive sins, for I will now perform a miracle which you shall see and which you shall be quite unable to dispute. It shall be wrought before you all and then you shall know that, as I could do what was evidently the harder thing, that is, say, ‘Arise, and walk,’ I had the right to say what has become the easier thing, ‘Thy sins be forgiven thee.’”

“Then He said to the man sick of the palsy,” while he lay there, “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.” Thus *Jesus marked out the miracle in detail*. It was necessary to pile up the argument to make it complete and overwhelming. First, “Arise, sit up, stand up.” The man could not do that if the palsy was still upon him—but at once, “He arose.” “Now roll up your mattress.” He stoops down and you can see him rolling it up. He now has it under his arm, or on his shoulder. “Now,” is Christ’s next command “Go unto thine house,” and he walks straight away off to his home.

Of course, in modern times, we make exhibitions of converts, and we should have taken this man up and down the streets, to show him off as a trophy. But the Savior does much better than that. For him to go home to his house was a clearer proof of being cured than for him to remain with Christ, for it might be supposed that, while he was with the Savior, some strange influence emanating from the great Physician kept him in a state of excitement and up to the mark.

So Christ says, “Go home to your house, to everyday life, just as anybody else might do. Go along with you, bed and all.” And off he goes. Every point of detail was necessary to make it clear that this was a real, radical, complete cure, and that the Christ who could work such a miracle was able also to forgive sin.

I remark, next, that *change of nature is the best proof of the pardon of the sinner*. You may come to me tonight and say, “Sir, I am forgiven.” I am glad to hear it, but how will you behave at home tonight? “I am forgiven,” cries one, all of a sudden, under a sermon, as if electrified. Yes, yes, and you want to stop with us, do you, and never go home any more? That will not do, because such a cure as that could not be a perfect, business-like, commonsense cure. Go home to your house. Your moral actions, your

temperance, your honesty, your chastity, your obedience to parents, your good conduct as a servant, your generosity as a master, these will not save you—but unless we see them, how are we to know that Christ has wrought a miracle upon you? And if He has not worked a miracle upon you in raising you up from the palsy of sin, how do we know that He has forgiven you? In fact, we do not know it and we do not believe that He has, for these two things go together—the one as the evidence of the power that wrought the other.

If you have been forgiven, you have been renewed. Sitting in this place tonight you may be forgiven all your sin. But if you are, you will not be tomorrow what you have been today. The drunkard's cup will not be lifted to his lips anymore. The company of the lascivious will not be pleasant to you again. No oath, no profane speech, no foolish talk will come out of your mouth henceforth. Christ forgives you outright, not because you are cured of your evil habits, but He forgives you while you are still palsied—and the evidence that you are forgiven—the harder thing as the world will always judge it to be, is your taking up thy bed, and walking home, quitting all your former sloth, for it will be sloth from this time. The bed which you could not help lying upon once, will become the couch of sloth to you if you lie on it any longer. You will take that up and you will walk back, and be a man of activity at your daily labor, in your own house, henceforth as long as you live.

Do notice this, dear hearers. We do not preach to you salvation by works, but when you are forgiven, then the good works come. The same Christ who makes you a new creature pardons your sin—you cannot have half a Christ—you must have Christ the Healer as well as Christ the Forgiver. If Christ could be cut up into lots, we could sell Him off immediately. But if He is to be taken all at once as a Sin-killer as well as a Sin-forgiver, there are always some who will fight shy of Him. I pray that not one of you may be of that kind.

I think, also, that *the detailed obedience that the Savior required was the best evidence that He had forgiven the man's sin*. "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Henceforth, to do everything that Christ bids you do, in the order in which He bids you do it, because He bids you do it, to do it at once, to do it joyfully, to do it constantly, to do it prayerfully, to do it thankfully—this shall be the token that He has indeed dealt with you as a pardoning God.

O my dear hearers, I am afraid that there are some who profess to have been forgiven, who are not as obedient to Christ as they ought to be! I have known them neglect certain duties. I even knew a man once, who would not read some parts of the Word of God because they made him feel uneasy. But be sure of this, that when you and the Word of God fall out, the Word of God has right on its side.

There is something rotten in the state of Denmark when you cannot read a chapter without feeling that you wish that it was not there. If there is any verse that you would like left out of the Bible, that is the verse that ought to stick to you, like a blister, until you really attend to its teaching. There is something wrong with you whenever you quarrel with the Word of God.

I say again, that detailed obedience is the surest evidence that the Lord has forgiven your sin. For instance, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do not omit any part of that precept, and if Christ bids you come to His table and thus remember Him, do not live in neglect of that command. At the same time, remember to live soberly, righteously, honestly, godly in this present evil age, for if you do not, if there is not a detailed obedience, there may be a fear that, after all, the Lord has never said to you, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

And last of all, *the best evidence is always seen at home*. "Take up thy bed and go unto thine house." If there is a place where piety is best seen and best judged, it is at the family altar. What a man is at home, that he really is. What a woman is in her own house, that she truly is. It is very easy, you know, to masquerade in society—to seem to be something very wonderful upon the boards of the world's theater—and then not to be in reality the king that you seemed to be, but after all, to be only a very sorry specimen of humanity. "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house."

One said to me, this very day, of a certain man, “Do you think, sir, that he was a good man?” I said, “Well, brother, I think that he was a good man of a very bad sort.” I did not know how to put the truth more charitably.

I remember an old woman who went to hear a minister of a certain creed that she did not like, though he preached uncommonly well. And when she came out, they asked her how she got on with the preacher. She replied, “Well, he is one of the best of a very bad make.” Now, I do not like to have to say that of anybody who professes to be a Christian and it should not be so. No, and I do not want you to be the worst of a good make either, though that, perhaps, is better than being the best or the worst of a bad make. We need to be such that we can bear the closest inspection.

“Ah!” says one, “I came here seeking the pardon of sin and now, sir, you have got off to moral conduct.” Quite so and that is where I want you to get off too. Seek the pardon of sin tonight—it is to be had, as I have told you, by faith. “Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

But if you want to make sure that Christ is really able to forgive your sin, the very best evidence to you, and the only evidence to the outside scribes, will be that you take up thy bed and walk. “Oh!” say you, sometimes, “I have many sins still, but I am not what I used to be. I am a changed man at heart. I could not bear what I once enjoyed. I could not do what I once commonly did, and the things that I loathed and despised are now delightful to me.” I am glad that it is so with you and I pray that it may be so with all my hearers. May God work that great and gracious change in many who are in this Tabernacle tonight, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 8:23-34 AND 9:1-13

Matthew’s Gospel is the Gospel of the kingdom and of the King. Here you see the King amid the storms of nature.

Matthew 8:23-24. *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

In the quiet confidence of faith, resting upon His God.

25-26. *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

As great a calm as there had been a tempest. After great trouble, expect deep, delightful rest and peace if you are a child of God.

27. *But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

Now see the King in conflict with the powers of darkness.

28-31. *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him,—*

How the demons crouched at His feet! The dogs of hell knew the power of His tongue—that was a whip whose lash they had felt before.

31-32. *saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go.*

He never wastes words on demons.

32-34. *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

A sad prayer, yet Jesus granted their request. Men may once too often ask the Holy Spirit to depart from them. They may grieve Him once more and then He will have done with them forever.

Now we shall see the King in conflict with the diseases of mankind and with human sin.

Matthew 9:1-2. *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith—*

The faith of the bearers and the faith of the palsied man, himself—

2. *Said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

It was remarked, by a mediaeval writer, that we do not find Christ calling any of the apostles, not even the very chief of them, by the name that He gave to this palsied man, “Son.” This is the title that He gives to a sin-sick sinner, lying on a bed before Him, waiting to be healed. Oh, the tenderness of Christ to sin and misery! He puts a kind of sonship upon this man which he had not possessed before.

3. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

“He arrogates to Himself the prerogative of God. Who can forgive sins but God only?”

4-8. *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

They rightly saw in this miracle, wrought by Christ, power given to man, for, as you observe, Christ said, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” And these people magnified God that one Man should have such power granted to Him. There is an elevation to the whole of manhood in the alliance of Christ with it. Through Him the Lord has given great power unto men.

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from thence,—*

The King is now going to show His power over the human will.

9. *he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

Everything bows before Him. Is He not King of kings and Lord of lords? Have we ever comprehended the true measure of His divine and human nature? Even when He was on earth and known as the Son of Man, what gleams of His divine glory shone forth in these truly royal acts of His! Yet how condescending was our King! Where is His court? Who are His attendants? Listen—

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

Lord of the sea, Conqueror of demons, Healer of the sick, Forgiver of sin, and now He has for His company publicans and sinners. When the Pharisees saw it, they did not see condescension in it, but they saw wickedness in it.

11. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

Ah! why, indeed? You and I know—that is a secret that has made us love Him better than almost anything else.

12. *But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

He has come here on purpose that He might heal our sicknesses. Oh, you who feel tonight sick with sin, and sick of sin, come and sit down with Him! He added, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,” and He will not cast you out, notwithstanding your sinnership, if you come unto Him by faith.

13. *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Let us never forget that Jesus is the sinner’s Savior. He does not come to save saints—He comes to save sinners, and the saints who are saved are kept from becoming sinners by His almighty love.

May God bless this reading of the Scriptures to us! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—435, 377, 394

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